in which dried fish, raw meat, ghee butter and other foodstuffs are openly displayed. These goods are always black with flies and as one drives through the narrow streets of the shopping centre a black, buzzing cloud obscures the windscreen. In summer it is much worse. The Arabs are curiously indifferent to this plague of dirt, bad odour and insects, and will sit for hours outside the shops, idly gossiping, while flies settle on their beards and faces, fall into their Turkish tea, or get mixed up with their rice. It is almost impossible not to swallow flies when one is talking, and the only remedy when in these districts is to keep one's mouth tightly shut. I have seen Arab babies lying in the open air, their eyes swollen and festered from some disease and covered with flies. Trachoma and cataract are common troubles among the Arabs, and it is surprising that epidemics of typhoid and dysentery are not frequent.

The blame for this state of affairs cannot be laid on the Arab peasantry, who are illiterate, badly paid and poorly nourished. They have been brought up for centuries in primitive surroundings and have come to regard their way of life as natural and even congenial. It is curious that where the poorer class of Arab has come into close contact with the American or Englishman he has imitated, in a bizarre and comic fashion, the Western style of dress, but he has stopped short at the more important aspects of our civilization. Perhaps, in his present state of culture, the Arab has an ingrained scorn of sanitation and health. By disposition, and owing to the intense heat of the summer months, he is a lazy individual, judged by our standards, working only when he must or when the fancy takes him. But there are deeper reasons for the Arab's tolerance of dirt and disease. To say that his attitude is inborn, as some visitors to the Middle East are prone to do, is begging the question.

The Arab has some admirable virtues, not the least of which is his strong sense of hospitality and charity. The poor man seldom goes away empty-handed, and the visitor is always sure of a meal, a resting-place for the night, and coffee. If not always strictly truthful, the Arab is unfailingly polite and his courteous manners would often put a European to shame. He has outstanding courage, particularly in battle, and despises meanness and immorality. He is frugal, kindly unless his fierce pride and spirit of independence are upset, and intensely religious. Indeed, what impressed me most about the Arabs of all classes was their extreme devotion to the faith of the Prophet, and their realistic interpretation of the Koran, which means more to them in their daily lives than the Bible means

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4



from clinging to the familiar things which form his background. 000
Thus Lawrence, who could live content on dates and honey with no company but that of simple Bedouins, resorted when on service in India to his portable gramophone and played records of the great composers' music, rather than listen enchanted t the monotonous, reedy chant of a hillsman's pipe.

I suppose that segregation from one's womenfolk is one of the hardest privations men have to endure in the desert. The men must have missed their wives and sweethearts, and felt depressed at times by the lonely silence of the desert, when nights are hot and disturbed, and the very stars have a cold, hard glitter. Enforced continence was accepted as a matter of course by the old travellers; at least, one assumes so, for they never seem to mention the matter in their books. This may have been due to old-fashioned delicacy, but I consider that deep thinking and the zeal for exploration had sublimated the normal sex instincts. Their books are scholarly and often restrained and factual in style, so that one rarely has a glimpse of the author's true character or inner thoughts. There is seldom a reference to the most commonplace of biological facts, and one feels that, beneath the bushy beards and thick-lensed sun-glasses, there bubbled a veritable volcano of repressions.

There is no doubt that the man who decides to spend part of his life in the desert must be prepared to overcome normal desires by sublimating them in some way. Work is the most effective antidote, combined with an undiminishing interest in the people of the country, their customs and manners. When one is concerned with other people one begins to forget oneself. The weak man who transgresses the laws of Christian and Mohammedan, and violates the harem or indulges in licentious practices lays up a great store of trouble for himself. He will incur the wrath and contempt of the Arabs, the hostility of his own associates, and may easily contract one of the many terrible diseases of the desert. Gonorrhœa, syphillis, smallpox and leprosy may be the harsh rewards of illicit adventures with the Jezebels of the desert.

The women of respectable Arab families are as remote and 562
untouchable as an Indian prince's bride; prisoners of the harem, 565
they are seldom seen in public, and then only in the company of their husbands and retainers, and deeply veiled. The peasant women one sees at all times of the day; they are timid, ragged creatures, about as sweet-smelling as a Malayan durian. They 514
perform their toilet on the shores of the nearest creek, squatting